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QUOTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 13769

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR CH UR AO XA

SUBJECT: SINO-SOVIET RIVALRY AND ANGOLA

SUMMARY: CHINA HAS HAILED ANGOLA'S INDEPENDENCE FROM PORTUGAL IN A RATHER SOMBER MANNER. ALTHOUGH THE PRC'S TREATMENT OF ANGOLAN DEVELOPMENTS IS CONSISTENT WITH PEKING'S GENERAL CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT SUPERPOWER AND PARTICULARLY SOVIET POLICIES AT HOME AND ABROAD AND ITS SELF-IMPOSED ROLE AS CHAMPION OF THIRD WORLD INTERESTS, CHINA HAS EVINced INCREASING CONCERN WITH THE POSSIBLE GROWTH OF SOVIET INFLUENCE IN AN AREA WHERE PEKING THERETOFORE ENJOYED THE GREATER INFLUENCE AND PRESTIGE. WITH LIMITED ABILITY TO INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF EVENTS, THE PRC IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE TO FIND IT ADVANAGEOUS TO ALIGN ITS POLICIES WITH THOSE OF THE OAU AND HOPE THAT MOSCOW'S POLICIES WILL PROVE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE AND FURTHER BURNISH THE
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PRC IMAGE. END SUMMARY.

1. AGAINST A BACKGROUND OF STEPPED-UP SOVIET INTERESTS IN AFRICA, CHINA HAS MARKED ANGOLA'S INDEPENDENCE FROM PORTUGAL ON A RATHER SOMBER NOTE. A PRC FOREIGN MINISTRY STATEMENT OF NOVEMBER 11 (NCNA NOVEMBER 15) HAS ACCOMPANIED THE TRADITIONAL PEOPLE'S DAILY EDITORIAL (NOVEMBER 14) HAILING THAT COUNTRY'S INDEPENDENCE FROM COLONIAL RULE. THE STATEMENT, LIKE THE EDITORIAL, IS HEAVILY ANTI-SOVIET, BUT IN CONFORMITY WITH OAU POLICIES REGARDING ANGOLA. IT THUS EXTENDS "WARM CONGRATULATIONS" TO ALL THE ANGOLAN PEOPLES AND ALL THREE NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. IT NOTES CHINA'S REGRET THAT IT HAS "NOT BEEN POSSIBLE" FOR ANGOLANS TO FORM A GOVERNMENT, AND MAINTAINS THAT DIFFERENCES ARE "NORMAL" AND COULD HAVE BEEN RECONCILED VIA PEACEFUL CONCILIATION. ANGOLA'S "UNFORTUNATE SITUATION" IS ASCRIBED TO SOVIET POLICIES AND ACTIONS.

2. CHINA'S TREATMENT OF DEVELOPMENTS IN ANGOLA, AND IN PARTICULAR ITS DIATRIBES AGAINST MOSCOW'S AFRICAN POLICIES, DOVETAIL NEATLY WITH THE RECENT UPSURGE IN CHINESE POLEMICAL ATTACKS ON SOVIET POLICIES BOTH AT HOME AND ABROAD. THE SOVIET INTEREST IN THE STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT AND MINERAL RICH AFRICAN AREA IS LINKED BY PEKING TO MOSCOW'S HEGEMONIC AMBITIONS AND CONTENTION WITH THE OTHER SUPERPOWER, BUT THE US RECEIVES ONLY RARE MENTION IN PRC MEDIA COVERAGE OF THE ANGOLAN SITUATION. (PEKING ALSO HAS IGNORED REPORTS OF MERCENARIES FROM SOUTH AFRICA AND ELSEWHERE ENTERING THE STRUGGLE.) ALTHOUGH IN KEEPING WITH THE PRC'S SELF-IMPOSED ROLE AS THE CHAMPION OF THIRD WORLD INTERESTS, PEKING'S TREATMENT SUGGESTS HEIGHTENED CHINESE CONCERN THAT THE USSR MAY BE ATTEMPTING TO CARVE OUT A POLITICAL FOOTHOLD IN AN AREA WHERE IT VIEWS US INTERESTS AS WEAK AND THE PRC HAS OFTEN ENJOYED THE GREATER INFLUENCE AND PRESTIGE.

3. IN LINE WITH THE PRC'S GENERAL CAMPAIGN TO DISCREDIT SOVIET POLICIES AND ACTIONS, AN NCNA NOVEMBER 14
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COMMENTARY ON ANGOLA ASSERTED THAT THE KREMLIN'S ACTIONS HAVE NOT ONLY SERVED AS TEACHINGS BY NEGATIVE EXAMPLE BUT AS A "MOST CONVINCING EPITOME OF THE SOVIET UNION'S ATTITUDE TOWARD AFRICAN AFFAIRS." PRC MEDIA HAVE SEIZED UPON AND REPLAYED A PLETHORA OF CRITICISM BY AFRICAN AND FOREIGN LEADERS AS WELL AS PRESS ATTACKS ON SOVIET POLICIES IN ANGOLA, AND IT HAS GENERATED ITS OWN STEADY STREAM OF ANTI-SOVIET INVECTIVE. THE

SOVIETS ARE CHARGED WITH INSULTING THE AFRICAN PEOPLES' DIGNITY, DELIBERATELY CREATING SPLITS, AND SINGLEHANDEDLY PROVOKING CIVIL WAR. MOSCOW'S DISREGARD FOR OAU POLICIES IN MOVING AHEAD TO RECOGNIZE, AS WELL AS IN PROVIDING MASSIVE MILITARY SUPPORT FOR, THE MPLA ARE ROUNDLY CONDEMNED WITH BREZHNEV'S LETTERS TO THE PRESIDENTS OF ZAIRE AND THE OAU ARE CITED AS FURTHER EXAMPLES OF MOSCOW'S BULLYING AND INTIMIDATION TACTICS.

4. CHINA HAS ALSO TENDED TO PROMINENTLY IDENTIFY ITSELF CLOSELY AS A SUPPORTER OF OAU POLICIES AND AFRICAN INTERESTS VIS-A-VIS ANGOLA. THE PEOPLE'S DAILY EDITORIAL SPECIFICALLY TERMED THE OAU CALL FOR EXTENSION OF RECOGNITION TO ALL THREE LIBERATION ORGANIZATIONS AND FOR THE RIVAL ORGANIZATION TO UNITE BOTH "EXPLICIT AND CORRECT."

5. IN THE PAST, CHINESE LEADERS HAVE ENTERTAINED IN PEKING REPRESENTATIVES OF UNITA AND FNLA (WHO SOUGHT ADDITIONAL PRC ASSISTANCE) AS WELL AS THE PRO-SOVIET MPLA (WHO SOUGHT TO PERSUADE THE PRC TO LIMIT ITS ASSISTANCE TO RIVAL GROUPS). IN ADDITION TO PROFFERING ALL THREE LECTURES ON THE NEED FOR UNITY, THE PRC HAS PROVIDED AID TO BOTH UNITA AND FNLA IN THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PORTUGUESE. BUT PEKING NOW PREFERS AN END TO THE ARMED STRUGGLES IN ANGOLA, WHICH IT VIEWS AS CONDUCIVE MAINLY TO THE GROWTH OF SUPERPOWER, (I.E. SOVIET) INFLUENCE IN THE REGION.

6. THEREFORE, IN HIS SEPTEMBER UNGA ADDRESS, PRC FOREIGN MINISTER CHIAO KUAN-HUA STATED THAT CHINA HAS NOW STOPPED GIVING "NEW MILITARY AID" TO THE ANGOLAN LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, THEREBY INDICATING THAT CHINA WILL NOT BE DRAWN INTO A

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LOSING COMPETITION WITH THE SOVIETS WHO HAVE PROVIDED TANKS AND OTHER MILITARY SUPPLIES TO THE MPLA. DESPITE CHIAO'S STATEMENT, PEKING HAS CONTINUED TO FULFILL AID COMMITMENTS TO UNITA AND FNLA FORCES AND PRESUMABLY WILL ALSO CONTINUE TO REPLACE LIMITED SUPPLIES FUNNELLED TO THESE GROUPS FROM THAT GIVEN ZAIRE AND OTHERS. SUCH A POLICY LESSENS POSSIBLE DAMAGE TO PEKING'S CURRENTLY GOOD RELATIONS WITH MODERATE AFRICAN LEADERS SUCH AS THE ZAMBIAN PRESIDENT (WHO FAVORS AN END TO ALL FOREIGN MILITARY AID TO THE ANGOLAN LIBERATION GROUPS). MOREOVER, WHILE MOVING TO TARNISH THE SOVIET'S IMAGE, PEKING, BY ALIGNING ITS POLICIES WITH THE OAU, CAN BURNISH ITS OWN AND HOPEFULLY KEEP AFRICAN AND OTHER PUBLIC OPPOBRIUM TO A MINIMUM.

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